

## **Publishing antiquities in the vernacular.**

### **The cases of Elias Ashmole and Peter Lambeck.**

**vittoria.feola@unipd.it**

The aim of this essay is to compare the publication agendas of two eminent seventeenth-century English and German antiquaries, namely, Elias Ashmole (1617-92) and Peter Lambeck (1628-80). The former founded the first public museum in the British Isles, the Ashmolean in Oxford in 1683; the latter was Keeper of the Imperial Library in Vienna between 1662 and 1680. While they never met or corresponded with each other, they were part of the same network of Anglo-German antiquaries and natural philosophers. It included scholars, such as Henry Oldenburg, Secretary of the Royal Society; the numismatist Ezechiel Spanheim; Sir Robert Boyle's protégé, Johann Joachim Becher; Isaac Newton's friend, François de Sluze. Both Ashmole and Lambeck rose from relatively humble origins to courtly positions; both received legal training through powerful relative patrons. While Lambeck has enjoyed a positive posthumous reputation, Ashmole's has been tarnished by misunderstandings about his legacy.

Both Ashmole and Lambeck, on the other hand, were proud of their own intellectual accomplishments, as well as of their countries' cultural heritage. They were interested in, first, the evolutions of their vernacular languages; secondly, in retrieving historical evidence about the English and German past, which they deemed as worthy scholarly pursuits as the study of ancient Greece and Rome. But while Ashmole enjoyed the

freedom to pursue his scholarly goals of arguing in favour of English as a learned language, as well as of England as a future imperial power - and he did so, indeed, in English - Lambeck, who would have wanted to do just the same in German with regard to the German language, never could effectively - indeed, his publications were virtually all in Latin.

The goal of my paper is twofold. First, it wishes to compare and contrast the political, cultural, and institutional contexts in which two typical seventeenth-century English and German antiquaries developed very similar publishing agendas with regard to their national languages and antiquities. Next, it attempts to explain some of the reasons for which Ashmole's vision was ultimately successful. Whereas Lambeck's wishes about the importance of German and 'the greatness of German antiquity', clashed against the complex reality of a multi-language, politically divided empire in the aftermath of Westphalia. Moving from two particular case studies on to the macro-level of early modern British and German history, I will conclude by adding to current historiographical debates about the rise and developments of national identity and of the sovereign state.

### **Elias Ashmole: publishing English antiquities in English**

Elias Ashmole was born in Lichfield in 1617, the son of a saddler and an impoverished lady.<sup>1</sup> Through his mother's family connections he moved to London where he studied at

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<sup>1</sup> The following biographical account is based on V. Feola, *Elias Ashmole. The Quartercentenary Biography* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2017).

the Temple and became a lawyer. During the Civil Wars he fought for the King. In the Commonwealth he retired to the countryside to lead a life of learned leisure thanks to his wife's money. He began collecting books and above all manuscripts about English antiquities and natural history. He also put out three English alchemical editions. At the Restoration Charles II rewarded his loyalty with the lucrative and time-consuming job of gatherer of the excise. Having received the renown collections of John Tradescant, he persuaded Oxford University to bleed its coffers to build a museum to his name on the grounds that Ashmole would bequeath to the University the entirety of his collections of objects, including Tradescant's, as well as his library. The Museum opened in 1683. Ashmole died in 1692. He is best remembered for his work on the Institution of the Order of the Garter, which reflects his political ideas about the English constitution and necessary anti-French foreign policy. In order to argue about Ashmole's uses of English in his antiquarian publications, however, I will now turn to his alchemical editions.

An important aspect of Ashmole's thinking was to do with 'order' in natural philosophy and religion. This was also shaped by his identity as an Englishman. Both of these claims are reflected in Ashmole's interest in antiquity. His *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* demonstrates them, as does his later antiquarian work on *The History of the Order of the Garter*. Although the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* is primarily a work of alchemy, in this essay I will consider it from the point of view of antiquarianism. The importance of Ashmole's sense of identity emerges clearly in Ashmole's editing of the

*Theatrum*. The importance of ‘order’ is shown mostly in his later antiquarian interests. In this chapter, I will consider first, the importance of Ashmole’s nationality and, secondly, his concern for ‘order’ as it emerges in his alchemical texts, but more importantly in his antiquarianism.

### **I. The importance of Ashmole’s nationality.**

Ashmole’s sense of national identity was important because it provided an intellectual context for his work. This is clear in his obvious sense of pride in being English and in the specific influences which affected his writings, in particular his use of various other writers as models. This is especially evident in the case of John Leland, the first great collector of English manuscripts kept in monastic houses. In the *Theatrum*, Ashmole intervened in the debate on the origins of England, praised England’s literary achievements, as well as English historical scholarship, and set out the British complement to Michael Maier’s *European Theatrum*, a monumental work consisting of twenty-one volumes of European alchemical texts.<sup>2</sup> These points will be examined in the following discussion of Ashmole’s pride in being English and also of the importance of John Leland in Ashmole’s work.

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<sup>2</sup> Meier, M., Lotichium, J. et alia. (eds.), *Theatrum Europaeum, oder ausführliche und warhaffige Beschreibung aller und jeder denckwürdiger Geschichten, so sich hin und wider in der Welt fuhrnähmlich aber in Europa...zugetragen haben...beschrieben durch J. P. Abelinum*, (21 vols., Frankfurt am Main, 1635-1738).

## A. The praise of England's antiquity.

On 21 July 1651 Ashmole gave the printer, John Grismond<sup>3</sup>, his “Collected Antiquities”<sup>4</sup>, gathered under the title of *THEATRUM CHEMICUM BRITANNICUM. CONTAINING Several Poeticall Pieces of our Famous English Philosophers, who have written the Hermetique Mysteries in their owne Ancient Language. Faithfully Collected into one Volume, with Annotations thereon, by ELIAS ASHMOLE, Esq. Qui est Mercuriophilus Anglicus*. The book contained Ashmole's ‘Prolegomena’, twenty-nine alchemical poems by different authors, a number of fragments and shorter works by anonymous writers, and Ashmole's ‘Annotations and Discourses, upon Some part of the preceding Worke’. The *Theatrum* demonstrates Ashmole's pride in being English and also allows us to note his place in an antiquarian tradition, both in terms of praising England and English learning and with regard to developments in the nature of historical writing. These two features of the *Theatrum* will be discussed in turn.

Ashmole's declared purpose was to vindicate “*Our English Philosophers Generally, [who] (like Prophets) have received little honor (unlesse what hath beene privately paid*

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<sup>3</sup> *Josten*, II, 579. John Grismond the younger was a Royalist printer, who avoided persecutions during the 1640s and '50s, despite his publishing virulent and seditious Royalist pamphlets. Parliament had passed the Treason Act in 1649, according to which people could be sentenced to death for publications against the State. Grismond also printed some of George Wharton's astrological almanacs (Wharton was another Royalist, as well as friend of Ashmole's). In 1652, Grismond set forth both Ashmole's *Theatrum* and Wharton's *Hemerescopeion Anni Intercalaris 1652*. See Plomer, H. R., *Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers who were at Work in England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1641 to 1667* (London, 1907), p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> Ashmole calls the texts in his book both “collected antiquities” and “chemicall collections”, *TCB, Prolegomena*, Sig. A4v and B2r.

*them*) in their owne Countrey.”<sup>5</sup> By ‘philosophers’ Ashmole meant in fact ‘alchemists’, who grasped the “Mysteries of the Kingdome of God”<sup>6</sup>, thus excelling in learning. This was a glorious achievement for England. Only a few people had understood it so far, however, due to the language in which these works were written (either in Latin or in old English) or in which they had been recently published.<sup>7</sup> Here Ashmole alluded to the *European Theatrum*, which was edited in German. For this reason, Ashmole decided to present in modern English the alchemical texts he had come across in the course of his research. When necessary, therefore, he translated some of the poems from the original version in Latin, or simply adapted the spelling to the taste of a seventeenth-century reader.<sup>8</sup> Ashmole’s comment on the need to publish books in English – “*How great a blemish is then to us, that refuse to reade so Famous Authors in our Naturall Language*”<sup>9</sup> – will shortly be seen in the context of seventeenth-century trends in the antiquarian movement. His commitment to the importance of English writers and the tradition they represented, however, is evident both in the respect with which he referred to them and in the fact that he wrote in English.

The best example that Ashmole provided for the superiority of English learning was the wisdom of the Druids. This allowed Ashmole to relate the genre of his *Theatrum*, that is

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, A2r. This passage seems to refer to the analogous one in Matthew’s Gospel, ch. 13, v. 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, A2r.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, A2v.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, B4r.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, A2v.

to say, poetry, to discussions about the mythical past of Britain. This is important, in that it allows us to see how Ashmole used his collection of alchemical poems in order to praise England's past by reference to its origins. Ashmole's idea of tradition emerged clearly from his account of the illustrious 'English Philosophers': "*As first, the Druydae (the famous and mysterious Druydae), that were Priests, Diviners, and Wisemen: and took their Originall and Name from Druys Sarronyus the fourth King of the Celts...Next the Bardi, who celebrated the Illustrious Deeds of Famous Men*"<sup>10</sup>. Ashmole advanced the authority of Julius Caesar to testify that the British Druids invented poetry: "*Caesar testifies, (and tis a noble Testimony) That the Learning of the Druydi, was first invented in Britaine, and thence transferr'd into France*".<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, since "*England flourished in the knowledge of all good Arts*", Ashmole can point out England's superiority over France, and even maintain that the University of Paris was in fact founded thanks to an Englishman, Alcuinus, or, Alcuin, "*in Charles the Great's time, through whose perswasions the Emperour founded the University of Paris*."<sup>12</sup> This meant that Ashmole could show that English philosophy is superior to any other philosophy. He based these claims on the ancient history of England and of English learning. He clearly believed that there was a strong tradition of learning in England and that this learning was given increased authority by its antiquity. Hence, he related antiquity, pride in being English and authority in learning or philosophy.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, A2v, A3r.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, A3r.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, A3r.

Ashmole's account of the Druids and the Bards also showed that he himself belonged to a tradition of writing current in the early modern period. It was in fact perfectly in line with a sixteenth-century historiographic tradition represented initially by John Bale – whom Ashmole cites throughout his final annotations to the *Theatrum*<sup>13</sup> – William Lambarde, Ralph Holinshed, William Harrison, and Richard White of Basingstoke. Bale (1495-1563) was a Carmelite, who later converted to Protestantism, whose main work was the *Illustrium Majoris Britanniae Scriptorum Summarium in quinque centurias divisum*. Lambarde published his *Alphabetical Description of England* in 1576; this was followed, in 1577, by Holinshed's and Harrison's *Chronicle*; finally, White (1539-1611) was the author of a long history of Britain from the Flood to the Norman Conquest, in eleven books.<sup>14</sup> The theme all these works set forth was that of Britain's pre-Trojan population, founded by Samothès, son of Japhet. The latter was one of Noah's descendants. In 2014 BC Japhet's son, Samothès, became the first king of the Continental Celts and of Britannia. He gave laws to both the Britons and Gauls, and taught them astronomy and political science. His son Magus taught them architecture and magic. Magus' son, Sarron, introduced schools of philosophy; the subsequent descendants, Druys and Bardus, founded the order of Druids, which developed music and poetry.<sup>15</sup> Ashmole seems to have believed all these writers and to have accepted their accounts of

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<sup>13</sup> *TCB, Annotations*, pp. 437, 444, 458, 470, 471, 477.

<sup>14</sup> Kendrick, T. D., *British Antiquity* (New York and London, 1950 edn.), pp. 52-73.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-1.



the mythical history of England which will be considered more in the next section and of the ancient development of learning in England.

When Ashmole called the Druids “*mysterious Druydae*”, however, he rightly implied that little was known about them.<sup>16</sup> It has been pointed out that English literature on this topic largely draws on descriptions of the Druids of Gaul. The ways in which British Druids were portrayed by the scholars of the Renaissance, the virtuosi and clerical antiquaries had little in common with historical reality.<sup>17</sup> Hector Boece’s *Scotorum Historiae a primae gentis origine* (published in Paris, 1536, and translated into English by John Bellenden, London, 1536) is credited with being the first book that restored the reputation of the Druids as persons of dignity, as well as auxiliars of the Cross, in that they helped the first Christian preachers to spread the new faith. John Bale, who relied heavily on Leland’s papers for his own biographies of British authors, adopted Leland’s laudatory line. William Lambarde, in his *Alphabetical description of England and Wales* (London, 1570), Archbishop Matthew Parker (*De Antiquitate Britannicae Ecclesiae*, London, 1572), and John Pits (*Relationum Historium*, Paris, 1619) helped to spread Leland’s version that the Druids had not opposed the introduction of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> In his *Scriptorum Illustrium Maioris Britanniae* (London, 1557), Bale described the Druids as

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<sup>16</sup> TCB, Prolegomena, Sig. A2v.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald Hutton, *Blood & Mistletoe. The history of the Druids in Britain*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, pp. 49-70.

<sup>18</sup> Owen, A. L., *The famous Druids. A survey of three centuries of English literature on the Druids* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 1-39, 59-60.

the ones who made England flourish with literary studies well before Greece. The historian who really made them fashionable again, however, was Camden, in his *Chronicles of England* (1577).<sup>19</sup>

Ashmole's belief in the mythical origins of England was also widely held among the fellows of the Society of Antiquaries, many of whom took these myths seriously. The Society was formed before the end of the sixteenth century but in fact did not last long. This was mainly due to the fact that English antiquarian learning was being pursued by cultivated gentlemen upon their country estates, as well as by prelates in their sees. London was thus no appropriate place for such an institution. Besides, Oxford and Cambridge supported the Crown's opposition to the Society, fearing that its members might be involved in suspicious political activities. In 1614 and 1617 Henry Spelman attempted to restore the now closed Society, but the Crown interfered and nothing was done.<sup>20</sup>

Ashmole's narrative was built on tradition. Indeed, by making use of the Druids and the Bards, as well as of Merlin and Glastonbury, Ashmole stressed the idea that tradition should be a reliable method for writing about the history of the nation. No further evaluation of historical evidence was needed, when the historian discussed such an important theme as England's glorious antiquity. Although Ashmole can be related to a

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<sup>19</sup> Kendrick, T. D., *British Antiquity*, p. 71

<sup>20</sup> Douglas, C., *English Scholars 1660-1730* (London, 1939), pp. 105-108.

tradition of writing about England's past, he can also be considered in the light of developments in the writing of history in broader terms. It will be seen that although Ashmole shared some features with other English historians, his belief in the authority of tradition means that he was different from many more 'critical' historians.

The rise of a new type of scholarship was marked by the publication of some important works. These included Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* (1614), William Camden's *History of Elizabeth* (1615), Francis Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII* (1622), John Stow's *Survey of London* (1598), and John Selden's *History of Tithes* (1621).<sup>21</sup> Stow's work was the first scholarly history of a town in English, while Selden's was the first detailed history of a particular institution. What made these authors different from medieval chroniclers were their views over facts and causation. The task of the medieval historian was to relate facts in order to show God's providential plans for mankind. Given the divine origin of history, all the historian could do was to help the reader understand the past and thus collaborate with God in the future. History's main purpose, therefore, was pedagogical: it taught people about God's will.<sup>22</sup>

During the sixteenth century, however, a change in perspective took place. Although God was still perceived as the first cause of human affairs, secondary causes were often given

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<sup>21</sup> Hale, J. R. (ed.), *The evolution of British historiography. From Bacon to Namier* (London, 1967), pp. 9-10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-13.

more relevance. This is particularly evident, for example, in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>23</sup> This meant a stronger emphasis on man's free will. It also meant a radically new approach to sources, stemming from a different idea of truth: while the medieval chronicler was ready to accept news that had been reported to him, the Renaissance historian began to rely on documentary evidence. Besides, State papers, the records of the law courts, and local archives began to be thoroughly researched. Access to State papers, however, was subject to the patronage of a high court official, as in the case of Camden, who was granted permission to use them by Lord Burghley; or, it could depend on the benevolence of a great collector like Sir Robert Cotton.<sup>24</sup>

Another crucial development took place, as a result of the isolation in which England found itself after the break with Rome: a new interest in the past arose, which led to writing the history of the nation in patriotic terms. Although many still wanted old-fashioned history, a wider public found more useful antiquarian surveys and municipal histories, in which they could find situations similar to theirs, and from which they could learn how to behave. John Higgins' *Mirroure of Magistrates* in 1559 was the first work to advocate a different analysis of the sources.<sup>25</sup> Actually, Ashmole acquired an alchemical

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>25</sup> Kendrick, T. D., *British Antiquity*, pp. 30-7; Hale, J. R. (ed.), *The evolution of British historiography*, p. 12. John Higgins (1570-1602), poet, compiler and antiquary, a member of Christ Church, Oxford, published a French dictionary and a book on Latin poetry. He became famous for his considerable expansion of William Baldwin's *Mirroure of Magistrates*. Higgins collected material on English history from the reign of Richard II onwards. In 1574 he published the first enlarged version of Baldwin's work, which was reissued the following year. In 1587 Higgins published a collective edition of the *Mirroure* with twenty-three new poems. Baldwin's work has remained attached to Higgins' version, hence it is remembered as Higgins'. For the biography of John Higgins, see *DNB*.

manuscript, which had been formerly owned by Higgins.<sup>26</sup> The isolation of England had been accompanied by increasing claims that England had always been independent politically and had never been subject to a ‘foreign’ power. It may thus have increased Englishmen’s awareness of their national identity.<sup>27</sup>

It is worth noting that most historical works in the sixteenth century were still composed in Latin, although translations were quickly issued. This changed in the following century.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Ashmole’s comment on the need to publish the results of the antiquarian’s collecting endeavours in English, that is a language easily understood by a broader public, summarises the new attitude towards both the English language and the English people. Language was no longer to be a means of excluding a native audience from English learning while sharing it with foreign readers. Rather, it was clear that English was a respectable way to communicate learning and that the English should all be able to read the beliefs of their compatriots.

Ashmole supported his argument for the need to read texts in English by claiming that England has never been “*without a Homer, a Virgil, or an Ovid*”<sup>29</sup>, as Chaucer’s sublime poetry demonstrates (and Ashmole calls Chaucer “*the English Homer*”)<sup>30</sup>. Chaucer was

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<sup>26</sup> Ashm.MS.1445, V, ff. 1-7b. The alchemical work is William Bloomefield’s *Blossoms*, one of the poems Ashmole included in his *Theatrum*. Higgins’ autograph is on f. 1r.

<sup>27</sup> Hale, J. R. (ed.), *The evolution of British historiography*, pp.11-12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> *TCB, Prolegomena*, Sig. B3r.

<sup>30</sup> *TCB, Annotations*, p. 471.

also one of the authors of the alchemical poems of the *Theatrum*, the *Chanon's Yeoman's Tale*.<sup>31</sup> So, for Ashmole, England's learning was as great as that of any other country, or better, the English language was as good a way of communication as any other, and even English poetry was as good as any other. Moreover, Ashmole drew on a number of specific English traditions for his beliefs about England's ancient history and the development of learning in England. But as well as looking at the way in which Ashmole's nationality was important for him, we can also explain Ashmole's style of narrative, as well as his appreciation and use of the sources, by looking at the antiquarian he regarded as his guide, that is John Leland.

#### **B. Ashmole's study of England's antiquity and the influence of John Leland.**

John Leland (1506?-1552) was library keeper for Henry VIII and, after 1533, "king's antiquary", with the task of searching for English antiquities kept in the libraries of cathedrals, abbeys, priories, and colleges. He undertook numerous collecting trips between 1534 and 1543. Leland meant his collections to be the basis of an ambitious work entitled *History and Antiquities of this Nation*. Although he deplored the loss of the large amount of primary material, which had followed the dissolution of the monasteries, he supported the new religious settlement. Leland was the first 'modern' English antiquarian, for the importance he attached to manuscript sources. Unlike previous and

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<sup>31</sup> *TCB*, pp. 227-56.

contemporary antiquaries, he did not engage himself in the description of local customs or popular botany, as other antiquaries did.<sup>32</sup> Another central interest of his was genealogy. He was not an historical scholar – indeed, he always portrayed himself only as an “antiquarius” – and, in fact, he wholeheartedly defended the Arthurian legend in opposition to Polydore Vergil’s scepticism on the matter.<sup>33</sup> He was also a very significant influence on Ashmole’s work as an antiquarian. This will be seen in an examination of his and Ashmole’s beliefs about the origins of England, their shared attitudes to more recent English history and the similarities in the way they approached antiquarian writing and, more particularly, their beliefs about what sources had authority. Ashmole’s concern for order and hierarchy will also be noted. This is related to the interest which he and Leland shared in genealogy.

Leland and Ashmole both seem to have accepted the traditional accounts of the origin of England and English history, including particularly the stories about King Arthur. The Arthurian legend was a central topic in many English antiquarian works on the origins of the nation. Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Welsh cleric, wrote in c.1135 the famous *Historia Regum Britanniae*, in which he spoke of the Trojan origin of the British. According to Geoffrey, the British were descended from Noah through Aeneas, the founder of Rome.

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<sup>32</sup> Kendrick, T. D., *British Antiquity*, pp. 45-7; Carley, J. P., ‘John Leland and the contents of English pre-Dissolution libraries: Lincolnshire’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 9:4 (1989), 330-57; Carley, ‘John Leland at Somerset libraries’, *Somerset Archaeology & Natural History*, 129 (1985), 141-54.

<sup>33</sup> Kendrick, T. D., *British Antiquity*, pp. 45-7. Kendrick defines Leland’s attitude toward the mythical past of Britain as “rigidly medieval”, p. 47.

In Western Europe, the Germans had claimed that they were the descendants of an earth-god. The Merovingian Franks made up a similarly grand tale, in which they were portrayed as the heirs of four brothers, Francus, Romanus, Britto, and Albanus, who united the Gallo-Romans, the Bretons and the Alamanni. These brothers were descended from Japhet, who was the first inhabitant of Europe after the Flood. The British chronicler Nennius, in the ninth century, turned Britto into the founder of the Britons instead of the Bretons. Besides, Britto was thought to have been a brother of Romulus and Remus, and, later, the son of Silvius and the grandson of Aeneas. Hence, Britain's history began with a prince of Trojan blood. Geoffrey added the Glastonbury story to all this. As the Franks had the myth of Charlemagne, Geoffrey gave the British the myth of King Arthur. The latter differed from the French king in a number of respects. First of all, Arthur was not crowned in Rome, which may be interpreted as the proof of Arthur's superiority compared with Charlemagne, who "needed" the pope's confirmation of his status. Secondly, he was not a law-giver, a reformer, nor was he the builder of a new era of peace. He was a barbarian, who sacked Rome despite having a Roman wife.<sup>34</sup> The graves of Arthur and Guinevere were "discovered" by the monks of Glastonbury abbey, in 1184. They made up the legend of Saint Joseph of Arimathea, as well. According to this tale, Saint Joseph came to England in 63 AD and built the first church at Glastonbury, where he was eventually buried. Saint Dunstan, Gildas, and Saint Patrick were laid also there.<sup>35</sup> The Arthurian stories, which emphasised the power of the English

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.



king, were very useful because they showed that the English Kings were not subject to foreigners. This was especially emphasised during and after the break with Rome.

In the early sixteenth century, scholars realised that the Trojan myth was false but they reinforced the Arthurian legend in order to re-tell the history of the nation following the accession to the throne of another Welshman, Henry VII. The Arthurian legend remained unchallenged until the late sixteenth century. Continental historians were no longer involved in unraveling the fantastic origins of their own nations. Indeed, the Italian humanist Polydore Virgil, who was living in England at the time, dismissed the Arthurian legend as an historical nonsense, in a short paragraph of his *Anglica Historia*. This gave rise to a century-long debate about it, which clearly demonstrates how meaningful that topic still was with English historians. This has to be understood, however, in the context of the Tudor cult and the use of British history as propaganda.<sup>36</sup>

Like Leland, Ashmole believed in the Arthurian legend. Ashmole related the Arthurian myths to the topic of his *Theatrum*, that is, to alchemy. The Arthurian myths, allowed him to back up his arguments about the historical evidence for the philosopher's stone. Ashmole told the story that Edward Kelly, who acted as a scryer for John Dee, the famous Elizabethan magus, found some magical powder, which had been obtained by a monk who had been able to produce the philosophers' stone in Glastonbury abbey.

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<sup>36</sup> Kendrick, T. D., *British Antiquity*, pp. 37-8.

Ashmole did not mention the fact that Glastonbury was the burial place of King Arthur and Guinevere, but he nevertheless made clear that that abbey had a special tradition. Hence he considered Kelly's discovery as fitting in perfectly with such a special place. "Doctor Dee, and Sir Edward Kelley were so strangely fortunate, as to finde a very large quantity of the *Elixir* in some part of the *Ruines* of *Glastenbury-Abbey*, which was so incredibly *Rich* in *vertue*".<sup>37</sup> This may be interpreted as a subtle way in which Ashmole, without openly defending the traditional account of Britain's origins, lets the reader know that he is aware of all the myths and that he agrees with them. The fact that Dee and Kelly found the philosopher's stone in Glastonbury is not at all surprising for Ashmole, given the special meaning of that abbey in the mythical past of England. Following Leland's example, therefore, Ashmole rejected Polydore Virgil's historical account of England. "I perceive *Poljd. Virgil* stole much *Tymber* from this worthy *Structure*, with part whereof he built up his *Worke*, the rest be enviously burnt."<sup>38</sup> Ashmole was aware of the controversy over the Arthurian legends and particularly Polydore Virgil's attitude. He chose Leland's instead.

Another example of Ashmole's use of his alchemical manuscripts as a means by which to reflect on the origins of England is shown by a marginal note he made onto the only copy of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* he owned. This is a fifteenth-century manuscript, which Ashmole apparently studied thoroughly, since he annotated nearly every leaf, with

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<sup>37</sup> *TCB, Annotations*, p. 481.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 470.

references to the Bible, with the exception of folios 80-88v, where he only jotted down the word “gold”. Gower’s poem upon the philosopher’s stone included in the *Theatrum* has been taken from those eight folios. The marginalia Ashmole made on folio 141v, however, reads: “Asia to Sem; Cam: Afrique; Japhet: Europe”.<sup>39</sup> These were Noah’s descendants and that Ashmole mentioned them shows that he thought about the ultimate origins of the peoples of Europe and England.

Leland’s influence is also clear in Ashmole’s reflections on more recent English history. We see this in what was possibly the longest marginal note Ashmole made on any of his books. This was a folio edition of 1532 containing ‘The Cook’s Tale’ and ‘The Tale of Gamelyn’,<sup>40</sup> which Ashmole purchased on 27 April 1642. Ashmole did not write down the date on which he started to annotate the volume, but he surely did so before the *Theatrum* was released, since we find similar considerations about Chaucer’s birthplace both in the marginalia and in the final annotations to the *Theatrum*: “Chaucer should be borne in London: though Leland supposes he was born in Berks: or Bedfordsh:”.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the volume, Ashmole referred to Leland. Moreover, Ashmole jotted down some information concerning Windsor Castle, in relation to Chaucer’s account of the Lords of Windsor.

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<sup>39</sup> Ashm.MS.35.

<sup>40</sup> Ashm. MS.1095, *The workes of Geoffrey Chaucer newly printed. With dyuers workes whiche were neuer printed before: As in the table more plainely doth appere.*

<sup>41</sup> Ashm.MS.1095, f. 331v. In the *Annotations*, Ashmole wrote: “Leland had *Arguments* which made him believe he [Chaucer] was borne either in Oxford-shire or Bark-shire”, *TCB*, p. 470.

The Lordes of Windsor. This may seeme strange both in respect that it is not in the French, as also that there was no Lord Windsor in those dayes. But I take thus: That although it stand not so in the French Coppy, yet Chaucer upon some conceit du add it, there by to gratifie John of Gaunt, or some other of the sons of Edw:3<sup>rd</sup>; who might well be called the Lord of Windsor, not only for that he was borne there, but also because at that tyme when as this booke was translated, the King had newly builded the Castle of Windsor, and therefore was endy [*sic.*] way, the right Lord of Windsore.<sup>42</sup>

This may be considered as a very early manifestation of Ashmole's curiosity about Windsor Castle and the reign of Edward III, that is, a central place for the history of the Order of the Garter, and the king who founded that Order.

Leland's influence on Ashmole's thinking about recent history and on his approach to historical sources may also be seen in Ashmole's repeated complaints about the dissolution of the monasteries. "Many Manuscripts, guilty of no other superstition then Red letters in the Front, were condemned to the Fire; and here a principall Key to Antiquity was lost to the great prejudice of Posterity."<sup>43</sup> Without Leland's work, "*All that was notable in this Nation had in all likelyhood beene perpetually obscured, or at last, but lightly remembered, as uncertaine shaddows.*"<sup>44</sup> Yet, another reason for Ashmole's negative opinion of the dissolution was that abbeys could have been the best places to look for alchemical manuscripts. Indeed, most pre-Reformation alchemists were members of religious orders.

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<sup>42</sup> Ashm.MS.1095, f.28a.

<sup>43</sup> *TCB, Prolegomena*, Sig. A2r.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, *Annotations*, p. 470.

Ashmole's 'faith' in what Leland said shows how he perceived his own role as an antiquary, and is a testimony of Ashmole's beliefs in authority and hierarchy. Ashmole's methodology reflected these beliefs. After collecting the sources, Ashmole used them uncritically on the basis of previous and famous antiquarians' accounts. A striking example of Ashmole's idea of the authority of antiquity can be found in his refusal to attribute a work to Ripley. This was 'A Dialogue betwixt the Father and the Sonne', which Ashmole believed to have been composed by Ripley. Because it had been 'traditionally' regarded as an anonymous work, however, he did not dare to change this tradition. "I durst not adventure to *Rectifie* what I found amisse...lest what I judge an *Emendation*, others may sensure as a *Grosse fault*: and withall ever remembering the strict *Charge* the generality of Philososphers have continually given to *succession* I, (even in what I feare are manifest *Imperfections*) dare not but most inviolably observe them."<sup>45</sup>

Ashmole regarded Leland as trustworthy or authoritative. Generally, Ashmole believed people were more reliable if their ideas were demonstrably old or if they were themselves from a high social background. This related to his and Leland's interest in genealogy. Indeed, another characteristic shared by the authors of the *Theatrum* that they were all "men very eminent", famous during their own lifetimes. Moreover, as they were important figures, they had not been neglected by posterity but their alchemical writings

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<sup>45</sup> *TCB, Annotations*, p. 484. Ashmole was right, as Ashm.MS.1382, ff. 10-24 clearly demonstrates.

had been. We can see this with reference to Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, and Dee. Ashmole underlined the high status of each of the authors of the *Theatrum* by visually stressing words in italics, which related to their occupation or family. Examples for this are Ashmole's definition of Norton as "*Alchymista suo tempore peritissimus*";<sup>46</sup> or his description of Ripley as "the Sonne of a *Gentleman*";<sup>47</sup> or his long genealogical account of Chaucer's family, whose name Ashmole traces back to William the Conqueror's time (Chaucer was born of "*noble Parents*").<sup>48</sup> Ashmole also makes a subtle reference to his own status, when, talking about a relative of Norton's, who was Master of the Ordnance to King Henry VIII, he points out that that was "*an Office of greate Honour, and not usually confer'd but upon Men very eminent*".<sup>49</sup> Yet, Ashmole had received the same "honour" by Charles I, during his stay in Oxford. Ashmole's insistence on social status was a respect in which his concern for order was evident in his alchemical texts; indeed, that he acknowledged status so frequently shows that he appreciated the hierarchy of society, and that he saw the members of higher social groups as having authority perhaps may suggest that he regarded these groups as being more trustworthy.

Another means Ashmole deployed in order to emphasize the high social status of the authors he selected was to provide an extremely accurate description of their funerary

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<sup>46</sup> *TCB, Annotations*, p. 437.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 438.

monuments, along with an explanation of the heraldic meaning of the coats of arms engraved on them. This again related to his interests in genealogy, antiquity and hierarchy or order, and was a typical antiquarian behaviour. This was particularly evident in the case of Sir Sampson Norton's grave; Chaucer's funerary monument in Westminster Abbey, and Gower's tomb in St. Mary Overie, Southwark. In fact, Gower's epitaph, which follows Ashmole's account of his coat of arms, concludes the *Theatrum*.<sup>50</sup> An example of Ashmole's synthesizing approach to alchemy and heraldry can be found in the following description of a manuscript containing Thomas Norton's *Ordinall of Alchimy*. "What was contained within the lower compasse of the *T* which in the *Originall Manuscript* was like a *Capitall Secretary T*. seemes (in my judgement) a *Coate of Armes*, for although it was drawne in the forme of a *shield* or *Scucheon*, yet within the compasse of the *Letter* (which I take to be the *field*) was *Azure*, a *Gryphon Rampant*, with *Wings displayed*, *Argent*. But to what *Family* it belongs I cannot yet learne."<sup>51</sup> In a sense, Ashmole's interest in heraldry sum up many of his ideas. It demonstrates his respect for antiquity, his beliefs about social status, his concern with order and hierarchy, and also the importance of his nationality.

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 438, 472, 485-6.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 444. The manuscript Ashmole referred to was Ashm.MS.57. Ashmole annotated on the front page: "This following Booke (called Norton's Ordinall,) was Transcribed by the hand of dr John Dee and had been bound in purple velvet". The manuscript was transcribed in a very clear Italic writing of the time of James I. This an early example of Ashmole's life-long interest in the Elizabethan magus, to whom Ashmole devoted the longest biographical account in the final annotations, pp. 480-83.

### **Peter Lambeck: publishing German antiquities in Latin**

Elias Ashmole's case study exemplifies the close and crucial inter-relation between language and national pride. The seventeenth century witnessed the consolidation of a number of nation States, including England. Indeed, the building of the modern nation State is at the heart of what historians have been calling 'early modern' European history. It is a defining feature of Western societies. The dynamics often varied from place to place and from time to time; yet, the link between language and identity was there, either explicitly or implicitly. England is an explicit case. English antiquarianism has been amply studied in relation to this issue, suffice to cite Graham Parry, as well as the older historiography on which he has built his narrative.<sup>52</sup> My own work on Ashmole has pinpointed the absolute importance of Ashmole's sense of national identity as reflected in his choice to publish only in English. In the context of this volume, a comparison with German antiquaries akin to Ashmole is both easy and hard to come by. I will now turn my attention to Peter Lambeck's case study as a means whereby to illuminate some similarities and, above all, many differences with our English test case.

Peter Lambeck was a German antiquary with a taste for scientific knowledge and communication; he was a learned Greek and Byzantine scholar, and a prolific letter-writer.<sup>53</sup> He was born in Hamburg in 1628, where he studied at the local gymnasium.

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<sup>52</sup> Parry, G, *The trophies of time. English antiquarians of the seventeenth century* (Oxford, 1995, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> The following biographical account is from V. Feola, 'Paris, Rome, Venice, and Vienna in Peter Lambeck's Network', *Nuncius* 31 (2016): 107-28.



Having lost his parents when he was a teen-ager, Lambeck's education could have ended then. However his outstanding knowledge of Greek earned him the favour of his maternal uncle, the Humanist and then Vatican Librarian Lucas Holstenius. From Rome, Holstenius arranged for his nephew to move to Paris in order to enrol at the Law School of the Sorbonne. Thus Lambeck was able to acquire a fine university education. He was also catapulted into the sparkling intellectual environment of one of the major centres of the Republic of Letters. There he met scholars of the calibre of the French atomist Pierre Gassendi, Mazarin's librarian Gabriel Naudé, the astronomer Ismael Boulliauld, the Dupuy brothers, and the printers Sébastien and Gabriel Cramoisy.

In 1646 Lambeck left Paris without taking a degree, and joined his uncle in Rome. There he was able to study the local antiquities, learn about librarianship at one of the best-stocked libraries in the world, though the Vatican library was not the most open to scholars. In 1647 appeared in Paris, chez Gabriel and Sébastien Cramoisy, his Roman-produced work, *Petri Lambecii Prodromus Lucubrationum Criticarum in Auli Gellii Noctes Atticas: Eiusdem Lambecii Dissertatio de Vitae & Nomine A. Gellij*. Lambeck had worked on a manuscript which the Dupuy brothers had procured him from Paris.

In 1647 Lambeck went back to Paris, and graduated Doctor of Law from the renowned Law School of Bourges, where scholars like John Calvin, Conrad Gessner, and Franciscus Junius the elder had studied under Alciati's influence. Lambeck's thorough study of the

classics in Hamburg was now paired with an excellent French university education in Roman law. On his return to Hamburg, Lambeck took up a post as teacher of Latin and Greek in his former school. Having been exposed to the Roman antiquities, he began to research the antiquities of his own city, eventually publishing his *Origines Hamburgenses ab anno 808 ad annum 1292*, in two volumes, in Hamburg in 1652 and 1661. He remained in epistolary contact with his French friends, and with Jacques Dupuy and Cramoisy in particular, who published in Paris in 1655 Lambeck's first work as a Byzantine scholar, *Syntagma originum et antiquitatum Constantinopolitanorum*. In 1660 Lambeck was back in Rome, where he joined the circle of Queen Christina of Sweden, under whose influence he converted to Catholicism.

In 1662 Emperor Leopold I became seriously ill and everyone at court prepared for the worst. During his convalescence Leopold took delight in reading and asked more and more frequently for books from the Imperial Library. The librarian, Matthaeus Mauchter, was however not exactly a model librarian. The Imperial Library was then housed in the Palais Harrach, in the Herrengasse, not in the Hofburg, that is, the Imperial Palace. Books and manuscripts were kept in unhealthy conditions, piled up here and there, some chained, others not, with moths and dirt dangerously eating paper out. Leopold thought that it was a shame to let the Imperial Library rot like that, and , following the advice of his confessor, the Jesuit Father Miller, he called on Lambeck to come to Vienna and do something about it. So Lambeck became Keeper of the Imperial Library, a post he held

until his death, apparently caused by diabetes, in 1680. There he put out the *Commentaries* to the Imperial Library, which he published in eight volumes in Vienna between 1665 and 1679.

Lambeck published a huge number of works, the exact list of which, updated until 1673, one can find in the *Catalogus Librorum quos Petrus Lambeckius Hamburgensis...Majestatis Consiliarius, Historiographus ac Bibliothecarius, composuit et in lucem edidit ab anno aetatis decimo nono usque ad quadragesimum quintum; nempe ab anno Christi 1673*. Two notable exceptions to his Latin-only rule are, first, the *Descriptio antiqui Codicis Manuscripti membranacei, quo continetur Diarium Vitae Friderici, vulgo tertii vel Quarti A.C. 1437...Inter excerpta varia Historica, quae ex eodem Codice ibi in lucem proferunt, notabilis in primis est vera et genuina Explicatio Symboli Imperatoris Friderici secundum propriam Ipsius tam latinam quam germanicam interpretationem*. This essay is part of a larger work which Lambeck obviously published in Latin in Vienna in 1666, namely the *Diarium Sacri Itineris Cellensis*, that is, the description of Leopold I's journey to the pilgrimage place Mariazell, in Steiermark. Lambeck's choice to reproduce such an important German antiquity reflects his philological training and approach to historical sources. He simply could not translate such a text. Among the ocean of Latin words flowing from Lambeck's pen, this island of ancient *deutsche Wörter* acquires a special meaning. Historians ought to stick to facts only. The observable fact in my research about Lambeck's attitudes to publishing

German antiquities in the vernacular is that he obliged to contemporary German practice of bowing to Latin. Yet, intellectual historians seek to contextualise data within the broader context, and look out for any trace of humanity among the personal papers of the people we study. Unlike Ashmole and virtually all of the English people whose personal papers I have had the privilege to read and become intimate with, Lambeck's personal correspondence is usually rather dry. The man is hard to come by. He did not let go. Very rarely did Lambeck let himself in the open. Ashmole's passion for England and the English language is not only a rhetorical topos in his published work, it is above all omnipresent in his private papers. Lambeck's love for German antiquities and the beauties of the evolution of the German language, on the other hand, are more hidden, yet scattered throughout his private papers. The second place in which Lambeck used German in print was yet again within the context of his philological work and antiquarian research into the origins of the German language. The piece in point is entitled *Othofrido Monacho Benedictino Weissenburgensi, qui Grammaticam Germanicam ab Imperatori Carolo Magno compositam*. While the title is in Latin, several excerpts from the manuscript on which Lambeck worked are in German.

In the catalogue of Lambeck's own personal library one is struck by the number of works he gathered about German antiquities. He collected hundreds of works in order to compile and publish his work on the Antiquities of Hamburg, the already mentioned Latin-entitled *Origines Hamburgenses*. It fits in neatly with the chorographical traditions

established in Northern Europe following, for example, William Camden's *Britannia* and André Duchesne's *Les antiquitez et recherches des villes, chasteaux, et places plus remarquables de toute la France*, Jean Petit-Pas, Paris, 1614, as well as his *Histoire d'Angleterre, d'Écosse, et d'Irlande*, Paris, 1614. Except, that while Lambeck never published his work on Hamburg in German, both Camden and Duchesne published theirs in English and French respectively. Camden and Duchesne's readers expected and welcomed vernacular editions of such capital works of national chorography. Would a German translation of Lambeck's antiquarian work on Hamburg have had the same broad appeal to German readers scattered across more than 360 German states? I suspect it would have been widely appreciated, actually, if only a group of German scholars had started pleading the cause of the German language along the same lines as already forcefully and effectively done in England and France. Of course, England and France had a long history of wide national support to the use of their respective vernaculars, support which some historians date back to the Hundred Years War (it was surely a turning point in England, with the official drop of Anglo-Norman French as courtly language and the adoption of English as language of the whole kingdom and court, with the first astonishing results in Chaucer's works).

On the other hand, Latin enjoyed the status of *lingua franca* in the multi-lingual Holy Roman Empire. The 'rule' of writing learned correspondence in Latin was widely applied by a variety of scholars across the empire. This is reflected in Lambeck's correspondence,

which is kept today in 4 thick quarto volumes in the Austrian National Library.<sup>54</sup> Lambeck wrote in French to his French friends, Italian to his Italian book agents who supplied the Imperial Library with fresh editions, and in Latin with all his other correspondents, most of whom were native German speakers.<sup>55</sup> Johannes Ludolf Praschius, for instance, was Senator from Ratisbon. In June 1670 he wrote to Lambeck in Latin with news from their common acquaintances, the Jesuit fathers Heinrich Boecler and Andreas Fromm, about the Jesuit Father Joseph Miller.<sup>56</sup> The latter had been instrumental in Lambeck's appointment as court librarian in Vienna. A few days later, on 5 June 1670, instead, Georg Hieronymus Velschig, from Augsburg, wrote Lambeck about the "Societatis quem Orientalem vocant", that is, he was after news from the Imperial capital about the newly-founded Imperial East Indies Company in Trieste.<sup>57</sup> Even Austrian scholars addressed their correspondence to Lambeck in Latin. Writing from nearby Klosterneuburg, Father Adam Scharer, Decanus of the said abbey, politely asked Lambecius to let him borrow a hagiographical book from the Imperial Library.<sup>58</sup> Native German speakers were in the habit of writing to one another in Latin even from outside the political borders of the Empire. The correspondence between Lambeck and Heinrich Oldenburg is a case in point.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Austrian National Library, Vienna, Cod. 9712-9715.

<sup>55</sup> Cod. 9714, f. 46r is a letter from Lambeck to his book agent in Venice, written in Italian.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 1r.

<sup>57</sup> *Ib.*, ff. 11r, 12v, 13r.

<sup>58</sup> *Ib.*, ff. 18r.

<sup>59</sup> *Ib.*, f. 3r-v.

## Conclusion

The English antiquary Elias Ashmole believed that knowledge should circulate in the vernacular. He proudly used English to praise the greatness of England's history in view of her greater future. I suggest that the circumstantial evidence available about the German antiquary Peter Lambeck points to similar beliefs, which, however, did not match his practices. Lambeck's life-long research into the history of the German language and the antiquities of his home-town, Hamburg, together with his two German language works cited above, may reasonably be taken as evidence of his love of German and 'Germany'. However, he bowed to German scholarly practices of publishing in Latin against his deeper feelings.

In fact, the similarities between Ashmole and Lambeck's antiquarian interests and practices go so far as to observe that the Englishman also amassed a great deal of materials for an antiquarian history of his hometown, Lichfield, and it was only due to lack of time that he never published an English book about it. The crucial point that I wish to stress here is that Ashmole was free to pursue and display his patriotism, because the intellectual climate in seventeenth-century England was one of assertive confidence in the moderns' ability to take over the ancients.<sup>60</sup> Despite famine, civil wars and the miseries of a 'puritan' Interregnum, English scholars approached the classics in a

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<sup>60</sup> Feola, V., 'The Ancients with the Moderns: Oxford's approaches to publishing ancient science', in Bullard, P., Tadié, A. (eds.), *Ancients and Moderns in Europe. Comparative perspectives* (Oxford, 2016), 19-35.

belligerent and confident way. As I have explained elsewhere, the University of Oxford's seventeenth-century output may be regarded overall as a major step towards the affirmation of the modern, vernacular-speaking, experimentally-minded new English scholar, partaking of the foundation of a powerful Great Britain. Lambeck, on the other hand, found himself a German "in exile" at a time of top German political weakness. Since the peace of Westphalia, who could possibly feel so self-confident as to say, 'we are going to build a greater Germany, and we shall start by translating all the classics into German, and we will show the French, the Italians, and the English, that we shall surpass the classics in learning.' That was not an option during Lambeck's lifetime. Unsurprisingly, therefore, he kept his love of German, German antiquities (which equals to saying German history) and Germany (that is the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, properly put it) rather quiet. He shrouded it in Latin *verba*, with the odd *deutsche Wörter* only to make them sound even more anachronistic, especially to English and French readers.

The issue of the contribution of Latin-language, German-authored antiquarianism to the rise of an early modern sense of national identity (or a multiplicity thereof) remains a fascinating yet under-researched historical question. This essay, within the present collection, hopes to start a conversation with historians of all kinds, from legal and political history to the history of science, the history of the book, and the history of the universities. I am convinced that we shall find it useful to keep comparing England to the



German States, because they shared much even if they practiced their common beliefs in different ways.